



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks
Beckman WMA Agricultural Lease EA
PO Box 938
Lewistown, MT 59457
Phone 406-538-4658

February 18, 2016

Dear Interested Parties:

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFWP) is proposing to renew an agricultural lease on 103 acres of the Beckman Wildlife Management Area (WMA). This lease agreement would continue the use of agricultural fields on the WMA for the benefit of wildlife and a lessee who is also engaged in a Cooperative Habitat Management/Grazing System with the Department.

The Department is currently seeking review and public comment on the Draft Environmental Assessment (EA) for this proposed agricultural lease renewal. The EA may be obtained by viewing MFWP's internet website <http://fwp.mt.gov/news/publicNotices/>. Hard copies or CD copies of these documents are available via e-mailing sandersen@mt.gov, by phoning (406) 538-4658, or by written request to Region 4 FWP, 4600 Giant Springs Road, Great Falls, 59405. Comments may be made online on the EA webpage or may be directed by mail or e-mail to the addresses above. Comments must be received by MFWP no later than 5:00pm on March 11, 2016.

As part of the decision-making process under the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), I expect to issue the Decision Notice for this EA soon following the end of the comment period. The Draft EA will be considered as final if no substantive comments are received by the deadline listed above. The Montana Fish and Wildlife Commission has the final decision-making authority over WMA leases.

Sincerely,

Gary Bertellotti
Regional Supervisor



Draft Environmental Assessment

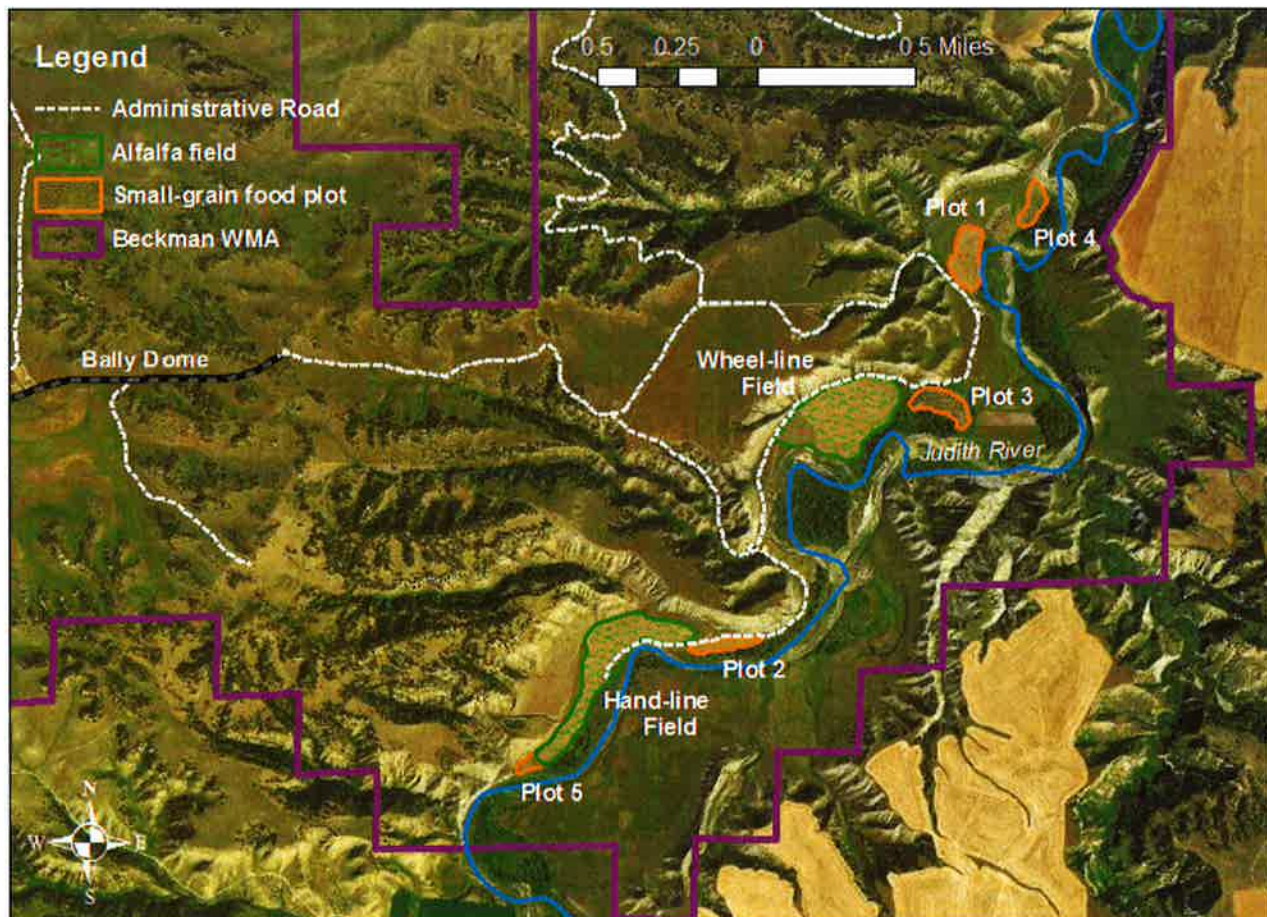
BECKMAN WILDLIFE MANAGEMENT AREA – ROE RANCH COOPERATIVE AGRICULTURAL AGREEMENT

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. Type of proposed state action:

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFWP) proposes to renew an agricultural (hay) lease on 103 acres of the Beckman Wildlife Management Area (WMA; Figure 1). This lease agreement would continue the use of agricultural fields on the WMA for the benefit of wildlife and a lessee who is also engaged in a Cooperative Habitat Management/Grazing System with the Department.

Figure 1. Beckman WMA Agricultural Lease area, showing hay fields and small-grain food plots.



2. Agency authority for the proposed action:

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks has the authority under Section 87-1-210 MCA to protect, enhance, and regulate the use of Montana's fish and wildlife resources for public benefit now and in the future. Also, in accordance with the Montana Environmental Policy Act (MEPA), MFWP is required to assess the impacts that any proposal or project might have on the natural and human environments. Additionally, MFWP's land lease-out policy, as it pertains to the disposition of interest in Department lands (89-1-209) requires and Environmental Assessment (EA) to be written for all new agricultural leases, lease extensions, or lease renewals.

3. Name of Project:

Beckman WMA - Roe Ranch Cooperative Agricultural Agreement

4. Anticipated Schedule:

Estimated Commencement Date: April 30, 2016

Estimated Completion Date: September 15, 2017

5. Location affected by proposed action:

The ~6,600 acre Beckman WMA is located in central Montana along the Judith River in Fergus County.

Legal Description of leased lands: Fergus County, T18N R16E Sections 4, 5
Fergus County, T19N R16E Sections 27, 33, 34

6. Project size:

	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	<u>0</u>
Residential	<u>0</u>		
Industrial	<u>0</u>	(e) Productive:	
		Irrigated cropland (hay)	<u>75</u>
(b) Open Space/	<u>0</u>	Dry cropland	<u>28</u>
Woodlands/Recreation		Conifer timber	<u>0</u>
		Upland range	<u>0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	<u>0</u>	Other	<u>0</u>

7. Permits, Funding & Overlapping Jurisdictions:

- (a) **Permits:** None required
- (b) **Funding:** N/A
- (c) **Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:** None

8. Narrative summary of the proposed action:

The Beckman WMA encompasses 6,568 acres along the Judith River in Fergus County, Montana. The proposed action would be to continue (renew) an exchange of use agricultural lease agreement with a long-time lessee whereby the lessee would hay approximately 75 acres of irrigated alfalfa fields, and cultivate and plant approximately 28 acres of five small-grain food plots. The lessee would retain the first cutting of hay in exchange for leaving the last (second) cutting in late summer un-harvested and well-irrigated.

The goal of the proposed agricultural lease would be to further enhance wildlife habitat on the Beckman WMA for mule and white-tailed deer, Merriam's turkey, and ring-necked pheasants by providing two fields of alfalfa during late summer/early fall for big game use prior-to and during the hunting season, and providing five small-grain food plots for upland game birds. The removal of one cutting of hay, with follow-up irrigation and leaving of the second (cutting) crop, would provide more high quality forage available to deer and other wildlife species through late summer and fall, a critical time for accumulating and storing fats. Cultivating and planting the small-grain food plots keeps grain well-dispersed along the Judith River bottom for upland birds, providing an important, dependable winter food source close to roosting cover. Due to their strategic location, birds and other wildlife species can minimize their movements as they travel back and forth between this high-energy food source and winter cover, thus minimizing their risk of predation, exposure, and unnecessary energy loss. Continuing to plant these food plots will contribute to habitat diversity and improve hunting and viewing opportunities for wildlife on the Beckman WMA as well.

The Department has covered the initial cost of irrigation equipment acquisition and major maintenance. As an exchange of use, there would be minor additional cost to MFWP. Remaining costs, minor maintenance, and farming responsibilities would be the lessee's responsibility. Responsibilities would include irrigating alfalfa fields, leaving the last crop (what would normally constitute 2nd cutting) well-irrigated and un-harvested, cultivating and planting the small-grain food plots, and controlling weeds on all portions of this agricultural lease. In exchange, the lessee would receive one cutting of alfalfa from the two hay fields.

Fulfilling the requirements of this agricultural lease is challenging, largely because of the remote location of hay ground on the Beckman WMA (i.e., 17 road miles from Denton). This distance adds cost to an operator traveling back and forth to fulfill lease responsibilities, such as changing irrigation sets, controlling weeds, etc. Other factors include frequent power outages as a result of being located at the end of an electrical line, the ever-changing nature of the Judith River and its affect on pump sites, and one of the fields requiring additional labor using hand-line irrigation system. Once hay is cut, moving it off the river bottom fields is also a considerable task. The current lessee is the nearest neighbor to the Beckman WMA, and has access to the WMA hay fields via a two-track from their property. Therefore it makes sense to continue the current lease provided lease terms are met for the 2016-2017 period.

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks proposes to renew this agricultural lease for one year, until September 15, 2017. See Appendix A for specific descriptions of the agricultural lease, as well as enumeration of additional services that include terms of payment and services provided.

9. Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action

Under the No Action alternative, the agricultural lease would not be renewed and haying or cultivation of small food plots would no longer occur on the Beckman WMA. As a result, the existing alfalfa fields and small-grain crops would desiccate, with some becoming unpalatable for wildlife. With no active farming, weeds would likely establish, necessitating additional control and management efforts at cost and labor to Department staff. An existing, traditional agricultural use of these 103 acres will discontinue, with attendant loss to the agricultural and wildlife productivity in the area.

Abandoning agricultural practices on these irrigated fields would likely reduce the attractiveness of the Beckman WMA to wildlife. With agricultural practices continuing on surrounding private lands, deer and other big game could increase use of adjacent private land, reducing hunting opportunity on the WMA and potentially increasing game damage problems on adjacent private lands.

If the No Action alternative is chosen, MFWP would continue to manage the Beckman WMA for the benefit of wildlife species and for public access. Current services and maintenance of the Beckman WMA would continue. No impacts to environmental or human resources would be expected to occur as a result of farming given that farming would no longer occur on the Beckman WMA.

Alternative B: Proposed Action

Under the proposed alternative, the agricultural lease would be renewed on approximately 103 acres of the Beckman WMA for one year, for the mutual benefit of the lessee, MFWP, and wildlife. Alfalfa and small-grain food plots would continue to be cultivated on the Beckman WMA.

The lessee would harvest hay and use this hay to feed their livestock located immediately adjacent to the WMA during the winter. As the hay originates from the Beckman WMA, it reduces the possibility of introducing non-native, invasive, or noxious plant species coming into the area as a result of the lessee using hay that comes from elsewhere. The agricultural fields on the Beckman WMA would be maintained and managed to prevent the growth and spread of noxious weeds at no cost and labor to MFWP. All other costs and maintenance as a result of this lease would also fall to the lessee.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

Below is the evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?		X				
c. Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				

No impacts are anticipated.

2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)		X				
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regulations? (Also see 2a.)		N/A				

No impacts are anticipated.

3. <u>WATER</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				3i.
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		N/A				
m. For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		N/A				

3i. Irrigation of hay fields will occur within prescribed limits and scope of existing water rights for the WMA; hay fields are currently in place and are managed as irrigated cropland.

4. <u>VEGETATION</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in?						
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?		X				4a.
b. Alteration of a plant community?		X				4b.
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X			4c.
f. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		N/A				

4 a/b. Hay and grain fields are presently in place and have been cultivated under previous lease agreements. Current proposed lease renewal is a continuation of these previous lease agreements.

4c. The lessee would continue to be responsible for controlling weeds.

5. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		N/A				
i. For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		N/A				

B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Increases in existing noise levels?		X				
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				

No impacts are anticipated.

7. <u>LAND USE</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				7c.
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				

7c. Hay and grain fields are presently in place and have been cultivated under previous lease agreements. Current proposed lease renewal is a continuation of these previous lease agreements.

8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?		X				
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		N/A				
e. Other			X			8e

8e. Chemical and biological treatment is part of MFWP's weed management plan to limit the infestation of noxious weeds on its properties per the guidance of the 2008 Integrated Weed Management Plan. Weed treatment and storage and mixing of the chemicals would be in accordance with standard operating procedures.

9. <u>COMMUNITY IMPACT</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?		X				
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				

No impacts are anticipated.

10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?		X				
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?		X				
e. **Define projected revenue sources		X				10e
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.		X				10f

10e/f. No revenues are generated by the agricultural lease on the Beckman WMA. No additional costs to MFWP are expected with the implementation of the proposed agricultural lease, as the lessee would be responsible for maintenance during the lease period.

11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u>	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
Will the proposed action result in:						
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X	X			11a
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				
c. Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)		X	X			11c
d. For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		N/A				

11a/c. Hay and grain fields are presently in place and have been cultivated under previous lease agreements. Current proposed lease renewal is a continuation of these previous lease agreements. This proposed agricultural lease will continue to provide enhanced wildlife viewing and hunting opportunities for the public.

12. CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)		N/A				

No impacts are anticipated.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. For P-R/D-J, is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		N/A				
g. For P-R/D-J, list any federal or state permits required.		N/A				

Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

The agricultural lease agreement between MFWP and the lessee would include all lease stipulations and enforceable control measures.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The proposed agricultural lease renewal on the Beckman WMA would be used to continue to improve and maintain vegetative conditions for big game and upland game bird species that use the WMA, particularly during the late summer through winter time period. The proposed renewal is not expected to have significant impacts on the physical or human environment. The project is expected to continue to benefit wildlife habitat conditions through the lease renewal period.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public involvement:

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on this current EA, the proposed action and alternatives:

- A public notice in the *Great Falls Tribune* and *Lewistown News-Argus*.
- Public notice on the Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: www.fwp.mt.gov – public notices
- Copies of this EA will be distributed to the neighboring landowners and interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having limited and very minor impacts, which can be mitigated.

2. Duration of comment period:

Public comment period will run for 21 days (February 15, 2016 – March 7, 2016). Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m., March 7 2016 and can be mailed or emailed to the following:

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
Beckman WMA Agricultural Lease EA
PO Box 938
Lewistown, MT 59457
Phone 406-538-4658 or email to: sandersen@mt.gov

PART V. EA PREPARATION

1. **Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? (YES/NO)?** No

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action. It has been determined that no significant impacts to the physical and human environment will result due to the proposed action alternative, nor will there be significant public controversy over the proposed action; therefore, an Environmental Impact Statement is not required.

2. **Person responsible for preparing the EA:**

Sonja Andersen
MTFWP Wildlife Biologist
215 W. Aztec Dr.
Lewistown, MT 59457
(406) 538-4658
sandersen@mt.gov

EXHIBIT A

Legal Description of Area Covered by this Proposed Lease Renewal

Two irrigated hay fields, totaling approximately 75 acres, are located on the Beckman Wildlife Management Area, 12 miles northeast of Denton, Montana, with the following legal description:

Wheel-line field: Approx. 40 acres in W1/2 Section 4 and E1/2 Section 5, T18N, R16E

Hand-line field: Approximately 35 acres in SE1/4 Section 33, T19N R16E

Five small-grain food plots, totaling approximately 28 acres, have the following legal description:

Plot 1: Approximately 10 acres in NW1/4 Section 34, R19N, R16E

Plot 2: Approximately 4 acres in NW1/4 Section 4, T18N, R16E

Plot 3: Approximately 8 acres in SE1/4 Section 33 and SW1/4 Section 34, T19N, R16E

Plot 4: Approximately 4 acres in SW1/4 Section 27, T19N, R16E

Plot 5: Approximately 2 acres in SE1/4 Section 5, T18N, R16E

Map of Alfalfa fields and small-grain food plots on Beckman WMA.

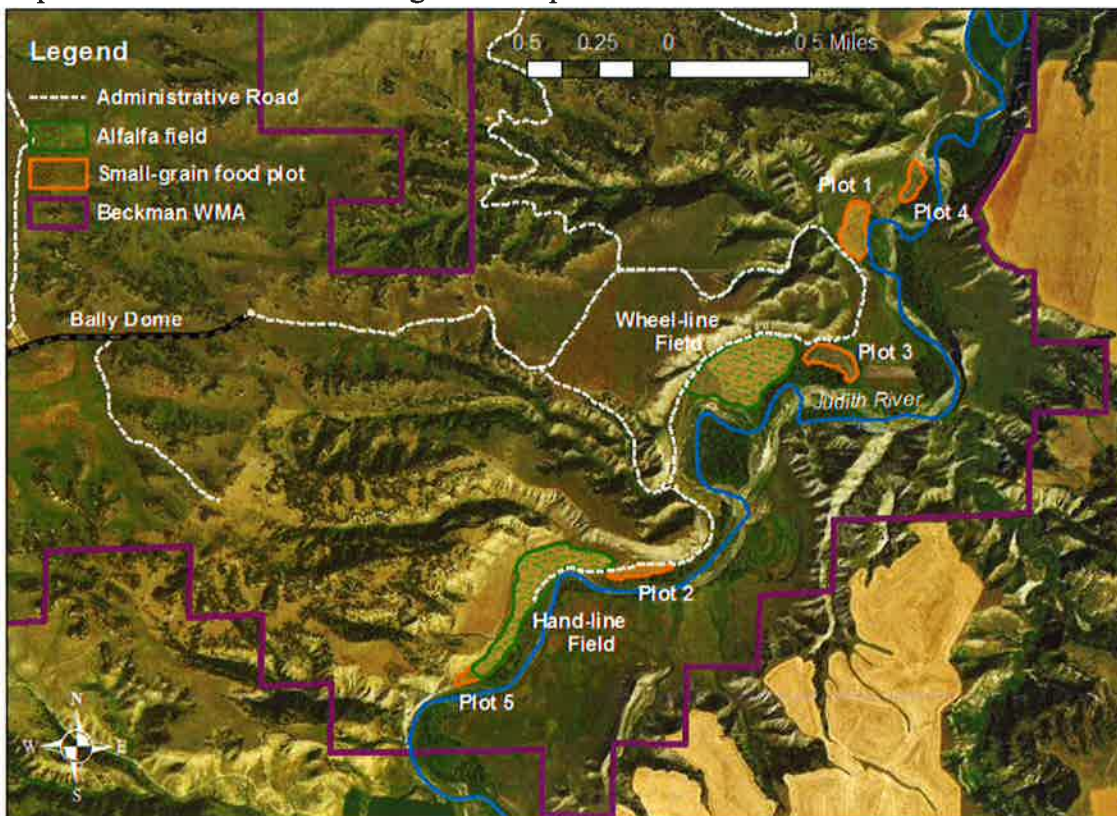


EXHIBIT B

Objectives, Justification, and Terms

OBJECTIVES:

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks (MFWP) considers Wildlife Management Areas (WMAs) as assets obtained to benefit wildlife, wildlife habitat, and the public. The objective of this agricultural lease is to produce and provide high-quality forage for mule deer, white-tailed deer, Merriam's turkey, and ring-necked pheasants by:

- enhancing the quantity and quality of alfalfa produced on two irrigated hay fields, and
- producing winter wheat on five other fields (food plots).

JUSTIFICATION/BENEFITS:

In prairie-breaks environments, winter survival of deer depends largely on fat accumulation and storage during summer and autumn months. In Central Montana, deer use actively growing (irrigated) alfalfa hay fields, particularly during dry seasonal periods, as a highly-nutritious forage source to accrue fat stores for the winter. Actively growing and matured grain crops are also important to deer, Merriam's turkey and ring-necked pheasants, particularly during winter months. Despite their advantages, producing grain crops and (irrigated) alfalfa hay for wildlife is a laborious and expensive process.

This lease renewal allows a lessee to continue growing and harvesting hay on the Beckman WMA, in exchange for leaving the irrigated alfalfa hay fields in good productive condition for wildlife in early fall, and for producing small-grain crops for wildlife consumption during the winter months.

AGRICULTURAL USES ALLOWED AND REQUIRED:

This lease renewal has two components: the farming of five food plot fields totaling 28 acres and hay production on two alfalfa hay fields totaling 75 acres (maps and legal descriptions provided in Exhibit A).

While this lease renewal encompasses a one year timeframe, it incorporates a longer-term farming cycle. During odd-numbered years, two of the five small-grain fields are in winter wheat grain production (the 10-acre field located north of the old Steiner house, or Beckman WMA headquarters), and the 4-acre field located just south of the headquarters along the north end of the hand-line field). These fields will or would have been planted during even years (Exhibit C).

During even-numbered years, three fields will be in winter wheat grain production (the 8-acre field just north of the headquarters, on the east end of the wheel-line field, the northern-most 4-acre field, and the 2-acre field located south of the Headquarters, adjacent to the south end of the hand-line field). These fields will or would have normally been planted during odd years (Appendix C). However, during the last year of the 2015 lease, lease terms were not met and these three fields were never planted. Therefore, an agreement will be made with the lessee to plant these fields into spring wheat or barley no later than April 15, 2016, and then resume the winter-wheat planting in 2017. During times when the fields are not in grain production, the lessee is required to keep the fields mechanically and/or chemically cultivated or fallowed and free of weeds.

This lease renewal also requires the lessee to irrigate and produce hay on two irrigated hay fields, and to

leave these fields well-irrigated and green at the end of the haying season to meet the forage and energy needs of wildlife on the Beckman WMA (Exhibit C).

To cover the annual costs of cultivating, chemically fallowing, weed control, fertilizing, seeding, planting the food plots, and producing and leaving two alfalfa or hay barley fields well irrigated at the end of the haying season, MFWP agrees to grant to the lessee the hay the lessee produces from the two irrigated hay fields so long as the lessee agrees to:

1. Provide equipment, labor, seed, fertilizer, herbicides, and pesticides essential for maintaining and producing hay in the two alfalfa hayfields (southern 35-acre hand-line field and middle 40-acre wheel-line field) and five small-grain food plots on the Beckman WMA.
2. Produce and maintain small-grain food plots, which will be left standing for wildlife, in two or three of the five fields, as designated by annual rotation (Exhibit C).
3. Use the water and existing sprinkler systems, owned and controlled by MFWP, on the two above-described hay fields for producing a first cutting of alfalfa hay and a second crop of alfalfa hay produced and left standing for wildlife.
 - a. Conduct soil tests if necessary, provide and apply the recommended rate per acre of fertilizer to both the hand-line and wheel-line fields during spring of 2016.
 - b. Provide and apply herbicides to control weeds with a non-residual herbicide.
 - c. Irrigate hay fields with a complete coverage of at least 3 inches of water (Exhibit C).
 - i. Pay all costs associated with irrigation, including all normal operational wear and tear and maintenance requirements to irrigation equipment, and all charges from Fergus Electric Cooperative, Inc. for operating the electrical pumps—on an ‘as due’ basis. Any associated delinquent bills will result in the lessee’s forfeiture of this lease.
 - d. Proceed with haying harvest no earlier than July 1 annually.
 - e. Remove all bales from the fields by August 15 and complete fall irrigation coverage of at least 3 inches of water to provide green up for wildlife species.
 - f. Remove all pipes and irrigation equipment from alfalfa fields no later than September 15 each year to avoid conflict with hunting seasons.
4. All harvested hay must be removed from the Beckman WMA by September 15 each year. If hay is left on the Beckman WMA past this date, it will become property of MFWP and sold.
5. No application of herbicides/pesticides permitted from an aircraft.
6. Maintain the existing fences around the hay fields to prevent cattle depredations to crops and crop yields on the Beckman WMA. Absorb any negative impacts/costs of livestock depredations annually accrued to crops and crop yields.
7. Absorb any negative impacts/costs of wildlife depredations annually accrued to crops and crop yields on the Beckman WMA.
8. Do not use existing buildings or facilities, or to establish temporary or permanent buildings or facilities on the Beckman WMA without written permission from MFWP.
9. Provide MFWP with a written report on or before December 31st of each calendar year that accounts for the agricultural practices (i.e. fertilizer, herbicides/pesticides, seed) used during the year, the amount of hay produced per cutting per field, and the dates that each field and crop of alfalfa was irrigated and harvested, and all of the costs of irrigation (electrical, irrigation parts, and repair, etc.).

SUMMARY:

Montana Fish, Wildlife, and Parks is responsible for statewide management of wildlife and critical

habitat in WMAs, such as the Beckman WMA. In order to meet these responsibilities, MFWP will enter into lease agreements that will be productive for wildlife, habitat, and a lessee by producing agricultural products and supplemental forage for wildlife on a WMA. In order to meet the objectives for all parties, there must be clear understanding of expectations and anticipated results. If the desired and prescribed results for the vegetation management of the WMA are not being met, termination of this Cooperative Agricultural Agreement may result. To be specific, the priority practices that are required are:

- At the end of the haying season, that the determined quantity of irrigation water is applied to the hay fields, as soon as bales can be removed from the fields, in order for the hay field to re-grow the green succulent alfalfa for wildlife (namely, deer) forage.
- Remove all baled hay from the alfalfa fields by August 15 each year to avoid seizure of hay by the Department. (Hay may be stored on the edge of fields until September 15.)
- Remove all pipes and irrigation equipment from the alfalfa fields by September 15 each year to avoid conflict with hunting seasons.
- Follow the prescribed requirements and schedules for the production of the hay fields and small-grain food plots as specified in Exhibit C.
- Remove all irrigation suction pipes from the Judith River after conclusion of the fall irrigation watering schedule.
- Prepare, control weeds, and seed the small grain food plots as specified in herein and in Exhibit C.

Failure by the lease agreement lessee to meet these priority practices may be justification to terminate the lease agreement.

EXHIBIT C

Schedule of Haying/Farming Practices

Table 1. Haying Schedule for Alfalfa Fields (Wheel-line field, 40 acres and Hand-line field, 35 acres), by month.

	April	May	June	July	August	September
Year 1 (2016)	Lease not active	Fertilize ¹ and irrigate	Spray weeds ² and irrigate	Irrigate and cut 1 st hay crop ³	Remove bales ⁴ ; Irrigate and leave for wildlife	Remove pipes and irrigation equipment ⁵
Year 2 (2017)	Irrigate	Irrigate	Spray weeds ² and irrigate	Irrigate and cut 1 st hay crop ³	Remove bales ⁴ ; Irrigate and leave for wildlife	Remove pipes and irrigation equipment ⁵

¹ Lessee will fertilize by providing and applying recommended rate of fertilizer (according to soil tests), per acre.

² Lessee will control annual weeds by providing and applying a non-residual herbicide

³ First cutting alfalfa will be harvested no earlier than July 1.

⁴ First cutting alfalfa will be removed off alfalfa fields no later than August 15, to commence irrigating for wildlife. Hay must be removed from the Beckman WMA no later than September 15.

⁵ All pipes and irrigation equipment to be removed from alfalfa fields no later than September 15.

Table 2. Farming Schedule for small-grain food plots.

	Plot 1: 10-acres North of HQ (middle N plot)	Plot 2: 4-acres North end of hand-line field	Plot 3: 8-acres east of wheel-line field (just North of HQ)	Plot 4: 4-acres North of HQ (far N plot)	Plot 2: 2-acres South end of hand-line field
Year 1 (2016)	Plant winter wheat ¹	Plant winter wheat ¹	Plant spring wheat ²	Plant spring wheat ²	Plant spring wheat ²
Year 2 (2017)	Produce winter wheat	Produce winter wheat	Plant winter wheat ¹	Plant winter wheat ¹	Plant winter wheat ¹

¹ Lessee will plant winter wheat no later than September 15, to allow time for germination and stooling.

² Lease terms not met in 2015; therefore winter wheat not planted in 2015. Lessee will plant spring wheat or barley on these fields by April 15 (agreement with lessee prior to lease activation on 30 April).